

Becoming a Detective: Historical Case File #3—Silent Sentinels

At the request of the textbook committee your class has been asked to investigate whether Hazel Hunkins deserves to be included in the next edition of the textbook. This case cannot be solved without looking at the role of the National Woman's Party (NWP), its relationship with President Wilson, and the NWP's most visible campaign tactic: organizing "silent sentinels" to picket the White House. As a member of the commission selected to review the case, your job is to examine the following documents to determine how the NWP strategists used this tactic to escalate pressure on President Wilson, and what effect it had.

- Why did the NWP decide to picket the White House?
- How effective was this tactic?

Step 1: Review Background Information

In 1920 suffragist Doris Stevens wrote *Jailed for Freedom*, a book about the woman's suffrage movement from the perspective of someone active in the cause. In it, she remembered attending the meeting where the National Woman's Party decided to picket the White House. It occurred right after the suffragists had met with President Woodrow Wilson to plead their case. The President told them that he had little power to advance woman's suffrage because he did not control the political agenda and could not force change. The suffragists were outraged by what they believed was the President's unwillingness to act. As Harriet Stanton Blatch, the daughter of renowned suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, saw the situation:

"'Never before did the Democratic Party lie more in the hands of one man than it lies today in the hands of President Wilson. Never did the Democratic Party have a greater leader, and never was it more susceptible to the wish

of that leader, than is the Democratic Party of today to President Wilson. He controls his party, and I don't think he is too modest to know it. He can mould it as he wishes and he has moulded it. He moulded it quickly before election in the matter of the eight-hour law. Was that in his party platform? He had to crush and force his party to pass that measure. Yet he is not willing to lay a finger's weight on his party today for half the people of the United States . . . Yet today he tells us that we must wait more—and more.' "

Stanton Blatch continued, proposing a new line of action:

" 'We can't organize bigger and more influential deputations. We can't organize bigger processions. We can't, women, do anything more in that line. We have got to take a new departure. We have got to keep the question before him all the time. We have got to begin and begin immediately.

" 'Women, it rests with us. We have got to bring to the President, individually, day by day, week in and week out, the idea that great numbers of women want to be free, will be free, and want to know what he is going to do about it.

" 'Won't you come and join us in standing day after day at the gates of the White House with banners asking, "What will you do, Mr. President, for one-half the people of this nation?" Stand there as sentinels—sentinels of liberty, sentinels of self-government—silent sentinels. Let us stand beside the gateway where he must pass in and out, so that he can never fail to realize that there is a tremendous earnestness and insistence back of this measure. Will you not show your allegiance today to this ideal of liberty? Will you not be a silent sentinel of liberty and self-government?"

According to Stevens, "Deliberations continued. Details were settled. Three thousand dollars was raised in a few minutes among

these women, fresh from the President's re-buff. No one suggested waiting until the next Presidential campaign. No one even mentioned the fact that time was precious, and we could wait no longer. Everyone seemed to feel these things without troubling to put them into words. Volunteers signed up for sentinel duty and the fight was on." (From Doris Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom*, New York: Liveright Publishing, 1920, pp. 58-60. Available at https://books.google.com/books?id=ASoEAAAAYAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s)

Step 2: Investigate the Evidence

Expect to spend about ten minutes on each of the sources in your packet, available online here: <http://mhs.mt.gov/education/women/HazelHunkins>.

Exhibit 3-A Hand-written letter: Hazel Hunkins to Mother, January 1917, Hazel Hunkins-Hallinan Papers, MC 532, box 80, folder 1, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute

Exhibit 3-B Photograph: "Women Voters Day on the Picket Line," February 14, 1917, National Woman's Party Records, Group I, Container I:160, Folder: Pickets, 1917, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. <http://www.loc.gov/item/mnwp000208/>

Exhibit 3-C Photograph: "Penn[sylvania] on the Picket Line, 1917," Harris and Ewing, photographer. Harris & Ewing Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. <http://www.loc.gov/item/mnwp000212/>

Exhibit 3-D Newspaper article: "Wilson Runs Gauntlet of 'Suff' Guards," *Washington Times* (Washington, D.C.), January 10, 1917

Exhibit 3-E Newspaper article: "Angry Men Tear Up Women's Banners," *New Iberia Enterprise* (New Iberia, Louisiana), June 23, 1917

For each source, answer all the questions on the Document Analysis Worksheet. **Note: You will be sharing these answers with your class in an "exhibit" format—so write legibly!**

Step 3: Search for Clues

1. List three things that you did NOT know about the woman's suffrage movement before reading these documents that you know now.
2. Was posting Silent Sentinels an effective tactic? What evidence did you find that supports your belief?
3. Why did people attack the picketing suffragists? Did issues beyond suffrage play a role in the attack? If so, what issues?
4. Did you find any instances when the documents contradicted one another? If so, describe them. Which account do you think is more accurate? Why?

Step 4: Crack the Case

Based on your analysis of the documents, and citing evidence to support your answer, please create a presentation to share with the other members of the textbook committee (your class) that answers the following questions:

1. Who were the Silent Sentinels and what were they trying to accomplish?
2. How effective were their tactics?
3. Whose perspective was not represented in the material you read? How might other perspectives change your analysis?
4. How does the material you analyzed relate to Hazel Hunkins and the committee's larger question: whether she should be included in the next edition of the textbook?

Make sure to include in your report:

- Specific examples! Quote from the documents.

- Information about where and how the documents contradicted each other (if this occurred) and how you decided which ones to trust.
- A list of any additional questions you still have that were left unanswered through your investigation.

After your presentation is complete, organize your material into an “exhibit” so your fellow committee members can easily access your evidence when creating their briefs. Your exhibit must include your answers to the following questions:

- What is the source called?
- Who created it?
- When was it created? How soon after the event it describes?
- Who was the audience for this document?
- Why was it created?
- Did you find evidence of bias or point of view? If so, what?
- How do these factors affect the source’s credibility?

Sunday, Jan. 14. 17

Dear little Mother,

I am almost sure now that I'll be here until after March 4th or inauguration. The enclosed clippings will explain the activity of the "picket line" and beside that we are working up a big convention for the 1st, - 4th of March. There is an immeasurable amt. of work to do in Wash. and the "field" is not so important at present. after March 4th, goodness knows where I'll be!

You know doubt are wondering about the White House picket; and probably think it is ridiculous and atrocious. It is justified in this way. For at least 3 days and intermittently from now on until inauguration, the attention of the public from coast to coast has been riveted as the federal amendment; whereas, in ordinary routine, no one would ever mention it. It has lined people up as for or against it which is much better than not having sides taken at all. And most of all it has called everyone's attention to Pres. W. attitude. We know the picketing won't change him but the public opinion concerted by it will have its effect on him and Pres. W.

Exhibit 3-A Hazel Hunkins to Mother, January 1917, MC 532, box 80, folder 1, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute

is very much affected by public opinion.

During the picket, by comments and conversations of the passing throng, we have a wonderful opportunity to see people's opinion of the Pres., and I never supposed a man could be so hated in the town which knows him best. I believe if the District had the franchise that it would have gone 100,000 against Wilson.

I am still doing work in the Treas. office, but little by little, I am edging my way into the Suffragist office which is my goal if I am to stay here. I am on the picket line a good part of every day. I am going to write up my experiences.

Last night, I was up to the Mac Kayes to dinner. They are so interesting tho' not as radical as many people I meet there. I love the radicals. They get to the base of things, and have the courage of their convictions.

I'll try and write a Justice this week, but I am so busy!

The enclosed is in payment of the 1st pension I borrowed. Don't be lonesome; you've got Schagie. Oceans of love. I wish you were here to feel and think by the same stimuli as I am! Hazel

Private

I am oh so sorry about your foot troubles!
It seems terrible that such a small thing
apparently could cause such pain etc.

I feel that this new work is a great big
step off the beaten path, but never have I
regretted it even when I was most dissatisfied.
There is so much gained and so little lost
by the new view pt. I am going places and
meeting people, and doing things that make
life interesting and I think that what I am
gaining is so much more than I could any-
other way. Look, where I've been and what
I've done & who I've met that — — we'll
say Esther or Catherine have not — since
last Sept. Compare my life the last five months
with anyone in Bgs and you'll see how much
I have to be thankful for. Why, I wouldn't
take anything for my experiences.

I say these things because I feel that your
dumppiness is largely dissatisfaction with
me and you - shouldn't be so. I am the most
fortunate girl in Billings. And lazily - I'm
planning to be home next summer.

Just faint at the enclosed check! And heaps
of love to the dearest person on earth - Take care of Stogie

Historical Case File #3—Silent Sentinels



Exhibit 3-B Women Voters Day on the Picket Line, February 14, 1917, National Woman's Party Records, Group I, Container I:160, Folder: Pickets, 1917, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

Note: The lead woman carrying the American flag and wearing a sash that reads "Voter" is Hazel Hunkins.

Historical Case File #3—Silent Sentinels



Exhibit 3-C "Penn[sylvania] on the Picket Line," 1917, Harris and Ewing, photographer. Harris & Ewing Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. <http://www.loc.gov/item/mnwp000212/>

Historical Case File #3—Silent Sentinels

—o—

**ANGRY MEN TEAR UP
WOMEN'S BANNERS.**

**Peaceful Pickets At White House
Finally Provoke Near Riot.**

Washington, June 20.—The peaceful picketing of the White House grounds by silent sentinels of the suffrage cause resulted in the first disorder today when a crowd of angry men tore down banners the women were holding for the Russian mission to see when it visited President Wilson. The rumpus was over before the police got on the scene, and no arrests were made.

The banners were inscribed:
"President Wilson and Envoy Root are deceiving Russia. They say 'we are a democracy. Help us win a world war so that democracy may survive.'"
"We, the women of America, tell you that America is not a democracy. Twenty million women are denied the right to vote. President Wilson is the chief opponent of their national enfranchisement. Help us make this nation really free. Tell our government that it must liberate its people before it can claim free Russia as an ally."

The banners attracted groups of men passing, who stopped and discussed them. Finally discussion gave way to action.

Cries of "traitors," "treason," and "they are enemies of their country," were shouted at the two men holding the banner and after one yelled "let's tear it down," the crowd jumped forward and the canvass was torn from fastenings leaving the suffragists holding the frames and poles.

One of the White House police pursued a man who, he said, was leading the crowd. The man was Walter S. Timmins, of New York, an electrical engineer. The po-

liceman recovered a banner from Timmins, but it was beyond repair, so the suffragists contented themselves with holding the damaged frames aloft in evidence of their "martyrdom" as one of them expressed it.

The torn banner was carried by Miss Lucy Burns, of New York, and Mrs. Lawrence Lewis, of Philadelphia, of the executive board of the National Woman's Party. They stood at the west gate of the Pennsylvania side of the White House and unfurled it just a few minutes before the Russian mission was driven into the grounds. Members of the mission paid no attention to it.

—o—

Exhibit 3-D "Angry Men Tear Up Women's Banners," *New Iberia Enterprise*, (New Iberia, Louisiana), June 23, 1917. Full page available at <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88064328/1917-06-23/ed-1/seq-1.pdf>

WILSON RUNS GAUNTLET OF 'SUFF' GUARDS

President Smiles as His Car
Passes Through Line of
Silent Sentinels.

PICKET WHITE HOUSE GATES

"Mild Militants" Flout Pen-
nants Demanding President
Aid Votes for Women.

"Silent sentinels," a dozen of them, each bearing yellow banners inscribed "Mr. President, How Long Must Women Wait?" are pacing back and forth in front of the two Avenue entrances to the White House grounds today, in the campaign being waged by the suffragists to force the President to give a definite answer to the question asked of him yesterday, when 300 or more of them visited the Chief Executive in the East Room of the Executive Mansion.

The twelve women will remain on duty till 6 o'clock tonight. Whenever the President leaves the White House before that hour, he will see one of these sentinels and her blazing banner.

Six At Each Entrance.

At each of the two entrances, six suffragists are located. They are saying nothing to the crowds of curious attracted by their presence. Like the sentry on guard at an army post, they are apparently oblivious to their surroundings.

An hour after the time fixed for their arrival—9 o'clock—the sentinels reached the Executive Mansion. They made no efforts to get to the White House. They remained on the sidewalks outside the entrance gates, and waited.

Every day, Sundays and holidays included, for an indefinite period, the sentinels will guard the entrances to the White House grounds.

White House Officials Puzzled.

They will be on duty but eight hours out of each twenty-four, however, and will be relieved at regular intervals. Every minute of the time between 10 o'clock in the morning and 6 in the evening, however, will find one of the "mild militants" on the job.

The White House officials are somewhat at a loss as to what shall be done, should the sentinels attempt to carry their campaign even further than the entrance to the grounds. They realize that they are facing a difficult proposition.

Wilson Sees Banners.

The President returned from a game of golf at 10:30 o'clock this morning and was driven to the White House through the northwest gate of the Pennsylvania avenue side of the White House grounds. On either side of the gate stood three of the silent sentinels.

So quick was the move of the Presidential car off the Avenue into the grounds that the suffragists did not

(Continued on Third Page.)

Exhibit 3-E "Wilson Runs Gauntlet of 'Suff' Guards", *Washington Times* (Washington, D.C.), January 10, 1917. Full page available at <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026749/1917-01-10/anded-1/seq-1.pdf>

SUFFRAGE SENTRIES GUARD WHITE HOUSE

**Flaunt Banners Demanding
That President Take Stand
For Votes For Women.**

(Continued from First Page.)

know of Mr. Wilson's presence until several seconds after he had passed through.

The President had seen the tri-colored banners at a distance and knew their meaning. His face was wreathed with smiles as his car passed through between the delegates.

Follows Visit to President.

The decision to place pickets about the Executive Mansion was reached at a meeting of the Congressional Union officials last night, following the visit to the White House earlier in the day of 300 or more suffragists, who called to present a memorial to the President on the death of Inez Milholland Boissevain, and, incidentally, make another appeal to Mr. Wilson for his support in their work. The President gave them a slight rebuff, and explained that he could, as the leader of his party, take no definite stand on that matter until his party had directed him to do so.

It then was determined to call to the attention of the President, at every opportunity, the fact that the votes-for-women advocates have not yet given up hope.

First Squad of Sentries.

The first squad of silent suffrage sentries was led by Miss Vivian Pierce, of California, carrying a huge banner, and with a body guard including the Misses Mildred Gilbert and Bert a'Crone, both of California, each of whom carried suffrage standards.

Other members of the first squad in-

cluded Mrs. M. C. Dowell, Philadelphia; the Misses Joy Young, Elizabeth Smith, and Winifred Frances, District of Columbia; Miss Maude Jamison, Norfolk, Va.; Mrs. Bessie Papandre, California; the Misses Augusta and Gertrude Crocker, Illinois, and Mary Gertrude Fendall, Baltimore.

The suffragists have orders to keep silent, and stand with their backs to the fence, facing the street, so that all passers-by can see the inscription on their banners.

Wear Suffrage Colors.

"If the police press you further, go out to the curb and stand there. If they press you still further, move your lines into the gutter. If they won't allow you to remain there, get in parade formation and march around the grounds, going from gate to gate.

"Don't come back here until your time is up."

Each picket wore ordinary street clothes, with a ribbon of suffrage colors across their breasts. It was a somewhat dreary day for "guard mount" duty, damp and raw, but all of the picketers cheerfully took their position.

There was some uneasiness evident among some of them, however.

"Gee whiz, how about eating? I'm hungry already," one suffragist exclaimed as she started from Congressional Union headquarters.

Police Will Not Act.

"And what are we going to do if we can't even talk?" one of her companions said, "That leaves us in a fierce position."

The twelve suffrage pickets will not be disturbed by the police. Inspector Harry Gessford, at police headquarters, said the department does not regard such banners as the suffragists are displaying as advertisements, and that, therefore, no permit was necessary for the silent demonstration.

Major Pullman, superintendent of police, said the suffragists would not be interfered with unless they violated the law. Just how far the women would have to go in their silent picketing to violate the law could not be learned.

Opposition to this method of "heck-

ling the President" was voiced today by Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association, who issued a statement disapproving of the vigil.

"I think the Congressional Union is beginning at the wrong end," said Mrs. Catt, "when it seeks to embarrass the President. The National Association is just as impatient of the delay in procuring suffrage as any other organization can be."

"However, it does not consider President Wilson himself responsible for the delay. The association regrets that he should be heckled by advocates of the cause at this time."

PICK KEY MEMORIAL SITE.

Secretary of War Baker and Quartermaster General Sharpe went to Baltimore today to select a site for the Francis Scott Key memorial, to be erected on the Fort McHenry reservation. They are to determine what buildings on the reservation will have to be razed.



**Buy Your
GRAFONOLA**

AND RECORDS the Easy Way

Payments arranged to suit you.
Our easy ownership plan makes it possible.

WORCH

1110 G N. W.

Come and Hear a Demonstration.

New York Beef 15c
With Mashed Potatoes

White Palace Lunch Rooms

1113 Pa. Ave.

1417 G St. 314 9th St.